nas SPLAT! news

August/September 2000 Edition

Volume 2, Issue 2

Nickelodeon's Studio Staff Meeting

The soul food filled our bellies and the drink flowed aplenty at the Nickelodeon Staff Meeting on August 9th in the Grand CourtYard. After stuffing our faces, we were entertained by a collection of clips from all of the shows being worked on. Anticipation fell upon the group as Mark Taivor approached the podium. What would he say? What's the future of the studio? Will we still have Free Lunch Friday? Silence enveloped the crowd as he unleashed the news. . . . "I truly believe that the future looks bright!" With the help of Alison Dexter, Kevin Kay, Ralph Sanchez, Laura Hunter, Emily Hache, Eric Coleman, Brown Johnson, Shara Stallings and Joel Kraenow, Mark addressed rumors, concerns and upcoming news. Overall, the meeting left employee attitudes on a positive note. Transition was the key word at the meeting and was used quite often. As Mark explained, the animation business is going through some transitions but at least now we have a better idea of what's going on and what to expect.

To quote Mark, "At the end of the year, I anticipate the studio will be full and in full production." Leading the charge will be *SpongeBob, Dora, Oswald*, the continuation of the six packs, hopeful a Nick feature and a new series to begin next year. *Hey Arnold!* and *CatDog* TV movies are in the works. The Beavers are starring in their very own rock opera called "Magnum Opus." Oh and by the way, "*SpongeBob*" is currently kicking "Pokemon's ass" (those are Kevin Kay's words, not mine).

Celebrities are also begging to get in on a piece of the action. Roger Daltry, Air Supply, Jay Leno and Billy Bob Thornton are just a few of the superstars that made the cut. It's rumored that Billy Bob was quite timid around Peter Hannan after hearing about his reputation.

Nickelodeon continues to lead the pack in its commitment to making kids first. Many of the upcoming shows include characters from different backgrounds and cultures. Nick Jr. is the number one choice for parents of preschoolers and their kids. In the words of Kevin Kay, "We create good characters, good stories and have a commitment to excellent production values." This is why so many shows have received such acclaim and honor.

Toward the end of the evening, even more positive announcements were made before the wrap up. Joel Kraenow introduced us to Nick Digital West and featured clips of current projects going on in New York. Also, Flash Animation, PhotoShop, Film Theory, and Production Layout classes will be offered at the studio. Events to look forward to include: Cool Caps for Kids in October, and The Friends and Family Party on August 27th. If you still have any questions or concerns, Mark Taylor's door is always open. And remember, he has a great candy supply!

-Jackie Buscarino

Special Thanks
To Andy Suriano
for the beautiful job on
SPLAT's new logo!

SHOW NEWS

Hey Arnold!: Well, the ship has sailed! We've shipped the direct-to-video TV movie, "Arnold Saves the Neighborhood!" (Whew!) Meanwhile, post-production continues on the last remaining episodes of season five. Is there a theatrical feature in store for our hero, Arnold? Wait and see! Our fingers are crossed in hopes of the green light for Arnold's adventurous search for his parents. Not satisfied with just saving the neighborhood, Arnold wants to save Mom & Dad! Aaaaand...Look out, Arnold! Hey, Helga! may be just around the block! Work continues on "The Patakis," the new spin-off from our fearless Craig Bartlett! Let's hear it for GIRL POWER!

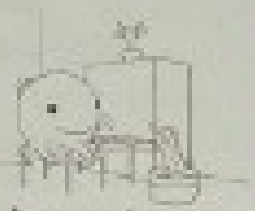
~Ken Mu

The Fairly OddParents: The rumors are true! It's official! "The Fairly OddParents" has just been "poofed" up for a seven-episode script pick-up. Yay!!! That means we get to write 14 more stories! And make more "funny." And there's even more good news. Frankie Muniz ("Malcolm In The Middle" fame) and Jay Leno (Jay Leno) have hopped on board as voice talent; Frankie as a regular and Jay with a guest spot as Timmy's favorite comic book hero, The Crimson Chin! So with our first half-hour already shipped and wands waving high, the Fairly Odd Team continues to churn forward towards the Poofadelic future.

~Jenny Nissenson

Dora The Explorer: Move Over, Barney. Time for tele-bye-bye, Teletubbies. Dora the Explorer is coming to a TV near you! The bilingual backpacker and her simian sidekick, Boots, hit the airwaves on Monday, August 14th at 11:00am, with a repeat that night at 8:00pm! Nicktooners are anxiously awaiting the reaction of America's preschoolers. Meanwhile, the show's production power has been boosted exponentially by the arrival of Miken Wong, our new Line Producer. Miken, who comes to Nick from Film Roman, describes her first few weeks at Nickelodeon as "colorful and the transition has been made easier by the help everyone has lent. Thank you. I'm happy to be here." Way to go, Miken!

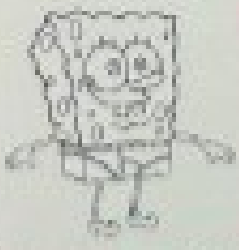
~Finbarr O'Riordan



Oswald The Octopus: Having found his hat, Oswald's back--with 26 episodes of lovable, fun-filled adventures! That's a handful, but when you've got eight, HEY! This Nick Jr. series brings the east and west coasts together again, with creator Dan Yaccarino and Nick Jr. offices both being based in the Big Apple. This may be the inspiration for Oswald's playground, Big City, featuring ice-cream cone highrises, lemon cars, and plenty of original characters to boot! If you liked the pilot, you'll fall in love with the series.

~Ryan Slater

MORE SHOW NEWS



SpongeBob SquarePants: On the Pacific coastline, SpongeBob joined Independence Day celebrations at the Fourth of July Cayucos Parade. Steve Hillenburg's friend, Tom Craig (a.k.a Wart), built a SpongeBob float that was a fantastic success. The float was accompanied by Craig's band, **Wart Hogs**, and The Cayucos Surfers. Each year Craig builds a float primarily constructed from recycled materials. This year's SpongeBob float was largely crafted from boogie board skins. Away from the waves, here in the studio, we will deliver our first second-season show August 4th. And now, for the pick up...

~June Bliss

INVADER ZIM: Every once in a great while an insanely talented group of people get together and create something special, something new, something... magical! It happened with the Beatles. It happened with the Reagan administration. It happened with the cast of *Different Strokes*, and if dark forces align properly, it just might happen with *Invader Zim*. Things are falling into place. Scripts are being written... with hilarious results! Voices are being recorded... with hilarious results! Designs are being designed, boards are being boarded, interns are being whipped... all with hilarious results! Can anything stop us? Technically, yes, but we're "the glass half full" kind of folk. (ZIM FUN FACT! - Staff Writer Rob Hummel has an enormous skull.)

~Brent Crowe

THE SCRIPT
Fun With WoRDs

Even today, in the 21st century, when most adults think trips to the movies are flying "learn cars," most people still don't know that animated cartoons are actually scripted beforehand. I was excited on the staff of "Invader ZIM." I can't wait for you, the regular cartoon viewers, all of our episodes to be finished before we get 'em. I think that because of such experiments with improved "Invader" shorts brought on a mailbag, it's clear that two-dimensional hand-drawn characters have very little to say on their own.

"Invader ZIM" was created by Jhonen Vasquez, whose fans are known for creating dark, gothic comic books like "Johnny the Homicidal Maniac." Though Vasquez has had great success with these stories about stalking lobsters, a show about an evil alien only makes a little more sense, and the scripts must reflect that. For example, an episode where ZIM steals Dominos organs would be in the kid's park. In episodes where ZIM faces his favorite recurring foe, Dib, the show, would not. However, if the fans of Dib's show wrote ZIM as a campaign slogan, destroying earth's major industrial centers, the story might be considered. A story idea can come in any form: sometimes an inspired idea detailed on a napkin, sometimes a struggle against a giant slug beast, or a golden trophy to be mounted. Sometimes the idea is more abstract, like: "There's this guy. And he's in space. And it's like really cold."

Our job is to give this little seed idea a full blossoming story. We don't write the episodes in a shadowy closet without the concepts in our paws. We often meet as an entire show writing group and all the writers, and sometimes even the artists, have input with the premise. From there we take it or write the full script, during which time we find that the premise really wasn't working at all, and we should have stuck with the premise in the first place. The script is then rewritten and rewritten, then perhaps even made funny. Then that script goes to storyboard, a title of the show, and there are only two months there, suffering builders on the whole script.

Each step of the process is extremely crucial to Invader because we have to make sure we're staying on track and producing a show in the spirit of the kid cartoon tradition. Sometimes we get notes like, "Don't make the main character's head," or "Please add more cartoon violence."

Though we've made writing shows sound easy, it's important to keep a group on the tracks of dramatic structure, story structure, dramatic tension, character arcs, screen point of view, etc. (If the things you paid to watch Wes Craven talk about at his SoHo seminar.)

But even a 5000 hr. CEO seminar could answer the three most important questions about writing a kid's cartoon: "Is it funny?", "Will the kids care?" and "Can you explain the plot twist with talking lobsters?" If "Invader ZIM" the answers is "Yes!", "Yes!", and "Why do you have to question the main character's head?"

~Eric Trueheart

Nickelodeon's Biker Haven

By Jackie Buscarino

Thrill seekers, anarchists, psychopaths are just a few words to describe the motorcyclists here at Nickelodeon. Their driving experience ranges from five years to ???. Mike Svejka refused to answer on the grounds that it might lead to date him. Their rides range from a Honda Helix Scooter to a 2000 Triumph. Below are some questions asked on:

Picking up chicks/dudes

"The standard response for girls is, 'It's so dangerous!,' 'Be careful,' 'What did you go and buy a bike for?,' 'Can I have a ride?'" - Ty Schiafrath

"I live on Santa Monica Boulevard. I can always pick up chick/dudes." - Ted Cauldron

"I used to think that I did, but compared to the action that Joey Daniello's been getting, I'd just have to say I've done okay." - Mike Svejka

Worst bug in your face

"I was hit in the face by a junebug going about 45 mph. I had a welt for days." - Wendi McNeese

"I don't know because I swallowed it." - Jen Powell

"I've eaten so many over the years, I've acquired a taste for them with Fava beans and a nice Chianti." - Mike Svejka

Accidents you've been in

"Never with another vehicle. I just threw myself off my bike for fun!" - Steve Kellanec

"I spilled out on my grandfather's moped. He called the bike "Jewel." He claimed he could talk to his vehicles. After I wiped out, he said, 'Are you okay, Jewel?'" - Ty Schiafrath

Your best advice for chaffing

"Buy a scooter with a big cushy seat." - Wendi Mcneese

"Save Hadcare lotion." - Jen Powell

"Don't ride a motorcycle. Bathe. Don't jog on the beach after swimming." - Ty Schiafrath

"I don't have a chaffing problem. If you want, I can prove it." - Joe Daniello

Family's and friend's concerns

"They don't care how I feel." -Ted Cauldron

"Most everyone thinks I'm going to die." - Ty Schiafrath

"They say I can do whatever I want, as long as I use protection. Thanks, mom!" - Joe Daniello

Interesting stories

"On my wedding day, my friends decorated my husband's bike with balloons, streamers, and a "Just Married" sign. On our way to the San Fernando Valley, we got honks and thumbs up from everyone." - Jessie Backer

"I drove over a car in an earthquake. I also drove over my foot." - Ted Cauldron.

August 2000 Calendar

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